THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS:
FIVE YEARS ON
THE ARDUOUS ROAD OF DEMOCRATIZATION
AND FUTURE PROSPECTS
The Arab Revolutions: Five Years On
The Arduous Road of Democratization and Future Prospects
January 21 - 23, 2016
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Introduction

Five years ago, a series of Arab revolutions and uprisings broke out and radical change seemed within reach. The revolutions came at a time when many doubted the ability to initiate change in the Arab world, only a minority considered that it is inevitable, once objective circumstances mature. The unexpected revolutions brought a promise of a brighter democratic future.

Although Arab people agreed on the long-term causes of revolutions, they disagreed on understanding their immediate triggers, defining the new leading forces, redefining the pre-existing political movements, and on assessing the emerging revolutionary scene.

It is true that the majority of Arabs, whether citizens or researchers, did not foresee the uprisings, despite the authoritarian regimes’ continuous oppression and the deteriorating political and economic situation. However, few movements and initiatives came into view to challenge the current situation. Although these movements were limited in time, influence, and space, they have probably pushed the limits by daring to think about resisting oppression.

In addition, the notion of Arab/Islamic “exceptionalism” gained some popularity among the Arab population. While some saw that the notion reflects a cultural uniqueness that resists the process of globalization, usually synonymous with Western hegemony; others considered that this notion evokes on a cultural difference that explains our failure in following the steps of other regions that have transitioned to democracy. Structural problems in Arab societies and culture, due to the distinctive character of Islam, differentiated from other religions. In spite of their disagreement, both proponents of anti-globalization politics and those who attribute to Islam incompatibility with democracy, converge in overstating otherness over shared human experiences and aspirations, and fall into a culturist view that ignores the power of principles that became significantly universal.
Moreover, ideas and not only emotions were marked by failures and blurred horizons, at least in the foreseeable future. That caused greater doubts in the capabilities of movements for change and in the influence of groups called “civil society organizations” a designation used prescriptively or extended to every non-governmental activity.

Difficulties, uncertainties and erosion of energy and high expectations affected minds and sentiments of people for a long period of time. For this reason, and in view of the acceleration of history in the early phases of the revolution, there was widespread faith in radical change which followed a period characterized by a sense of surprise at the depth and scope of radical transformations. People were confident that what was unlikely for decades has become possible and they are now able to assert their dignity, enjoy freedom and take part in shaping their future.

However, the knowledge about Arab societies was not adequate enough to allow a lucid assessment of realities. Authoritarian regimes and security agencies imposed limitations on researchers and restricted the liberties of those who analyze and discuss the problems of their societies. In fact, they thought that ignorance of social conditions facilitates their work as they monopolize certain focus of knowledge for the benefit of their domination. This policy, led many people to whisper and spread rumors, denounce others, and be cautious in exchanging information and opinions. For that reason, serious studies on the situation in the Arab region remained limited in a number of countries.

Since the early beginnings, observers did not agree on describing the movement for change as protest, uprising, or revolution. The metaphor “Arab Spring” soon prevailed. It is true that this term inspires the season of flowers blooming, but it also describes a short-lived season. The 2001 Damascus Spring did not last; its promises faded away so quickly, and many of its activists were imprisoned. Before that, there was the “Prague Spring” in August 1968 which ended with the invasion of Soviet tanks. Also, in the “1848 Spring”, referenced by many historians and commentators, unforeseen and simultaneous revolutions were quickly blocked and led to failure.
Regardless of the comparison with other “springs”, a considerable number of people who subscribed to the aforementioned metaphor expressed their fears about the coming “autumn” or “winter”. The usage of “Arab Spring” confirms, consciously or unconsciously, that the analogy suggests an explanation and a hypothesis. Perhaps, the use of the metaphor reflects the hesitation to speak about revolutions.

Revolution for some implies a normative idea about its preconditions and theory. Thus, they evaluate a revolutionary scene according their preconceived model in order to determine if it is worthy of the label “revolution.” They believe a revolution ought to strive for a radical change beyond the struggle for freedom, the popular demand of the end of despotism and the aspiration to democratic participation.

An ideological vision may have concealed the simple truth that authoritarian regimes are only concerned about self-preservation. The Arab regimes, which were brought down, and those about to fall compensate for their lack of legitimacy by mixing national or nationalist pretense with repressive violence. They make little or no distinction between the public and private. The public sphere including the land, the people, the institutions, and the political scene, are their private property. Loyalty to the ruler prevails over loyalty to the state or is a prerequisite to it; and the will of the ruler transcends laws.

Although Arab revolutions share demands, claims, and protest strategies, the specifics of every national situation could not be overshadowed. Societies seem concerned about their domestic problems more than about their pan-Arab aspirations. For that reason, some in the West and in our region were led to state that politics has shifted to where it belongs, becoming a primarily local affair. Issues of freedom, democracy, individual dignity, and social justice prevailed over the causes of the Arab nation, including its position in the world, its renaissance, and liberation from foreign hegemony. But the influence of cultural affinities and the feeling of a common future could not be discarded. That being said, others minimized the importance of differences between societies, their histories, and the diverse orientations of reformists and revolutionaries.
Today, worried and fearful questions are present in every discussion on the fate of Arab revolutions. However, the legitimate concerns are one thing, and the aggravation of fears, often engineered, is another. Therefore, we have to address the concerns of those worried about the future of the revolutions, and assess the influence of exaggerated or manipulated fears.

More often than not, disappointment results from exaggerated idealistic enthusiasm for the Arab revolutions, especially that the revolutions surpassed the expectations of both the authoritarian regimes and those who oppose them. But it is fueled by claims of those who amplify the difficulties of transition, vilify its leaders, demonize Islamists among them, and make improper analogies to serve their ends.

Both arrays of disappointment are comprehensible, but respecting the first and being aware of the risks of the second require acknowledging that everybody feels worried at the times of transition and change of power. Revolutions are full of pitfalls and contradictory opportunities; power relations are changing, constantly. However, acknowledging legitimate concerns does not mean they should not be subjected to a critical examination in order to avoid generalization and preconceived explanations of different revolutionary trajectories.

This conference will revisit the Arab revolutions to explore the achievements and failures of the last five years, their causes and future prospects, and define their commonalities and differences. In addition we will examine if and how processes of change lead to unexpected results. This paves the way to address the following main questions: Has the “Arab Spring” ended, and has it thus brought reverse effects? Should we approach this issue in light of the concept of social change? Do we have, in case we decide to use such term in our research, to look at change as a long-term historical process open to multiple possibilities?

To be sure, we will not be bound by pre-set ideas or theories of democratic transition; we need not concentrate on discussing or refuting them. The conference will be structured around cross-cutting topics, but will give the necessary attention to the specificities of every country. Moreover,
and in spite of the importance of comparisons, they are not a prerequisite for the approaches to the plurality of situations.

**The Topics:**

In this framework, the conference will tackle four main interrelated topics:

1. **The State: Its Structure and the Way it Impacts the Difficult Transition:** this topic covers the following issues: the emergence of hereditary republics; identification between power and the state; the effect of the state on revolutions; the effect of the revolutions on the state; the modern Arab state between institutional fragility and the strength of security agencies; excessive state violence in the face of revolutions and protest movements; the roles of military and security institutions; the redefinition of these roles in the new structure of the political system, especially in the first year of the outbreak of revolution; and finally, what are the role of the state and the nature of its relationship with power according to the various revolutionary patterns?

2. **Democracy: Spontaneous Revolutions and Organized Forces:** Is there an Arab democratic alternative supported by a genuine social base? Is there a real social demand for democracy? What is the role of transitional justice and the legal and judicial institutions in making, impeding, or even reversing democratic change? Do the roles, of institutions as manifested in the concrete situation, provide legitimacy to main political actors? Are they essential in consolidating the process of democratic transition? What is the role of the media, particularly satellite TV channels, in the aforementioned context?

3. **Recent Dynamics in Society:** What is the relationship between traditional society and civil society during the past five years? How did inherited civil structures reemerge, and is this reemergence functional or structural? To what extent is this determined by power sharing? What is the impact of the advocacy of federalism and regional self-rule? Is political violence structural in traditional societies with strong sub-national identities? What are the consequences of the Islamic/
secular polarization on the intricate process of democratization, on aggravating of the dynamics of social fragmentation, and on impairing social harmony during the stages of transition? Who are the Islamic and secular actors in the polarization? Furthermore, what are the effects of social media on the current situation and what are its limits? Is the role of the media exaggerated in such a way that it appears more influential than the socio-political factors in the outbreak of the uprisings and revolutions? Or else, is their role merely a technical and complementary one, serving exchange and political mobilization?

4. Regional and International Polarizations and their Impact on Revolutions: What relationship between internal dynamics and foreign influence in a turbulent geo-political context that is caught between a web of international interests, the political and military “game of nations,” and international humanitarian law? In addition, what are the consequences of the erosion of the traditional concept of sovereignty, i.e. the Westphalian sovereignty, especially in a phase where states exercise excessive use of power and violence that falls beyond the standards and the limits of national laws? Moreover, what is the role of direct intervention of foreign state agencies in the revolutionary scene? Does the direct or semi-direct involvement of regional and international parties in the socio-political revolutionary context enhances the possibility of structural changes in the regional order, based on the Unitarian sovereign-state, of new state systems, whether federalist or capable of accommodating regional autonomy or constitutionalizing communalism.

Format and Languages

Arabic and English will be the languages of the conference and papers. Some sessions will be public.
Abstracts

The Tunisian Revolution and the Other Transition in Tunisia: Power, Resources, Considerations, and Values
Mouldi Lahmar

Relying on a number of field studies of the Tunisian Revolution, this paper addresses the concept of the “transitional state”, or, interchangeably the “democratic transformation” which was first enunciated by Anglo-Saxon and specifically North American scholars. The paper shifts attention from the political and media scenes, which focus on legal issues and the rebuilding of state institutions and civil society, to a political situation that is not under the spotlight, despite being closely related to what is happening at the surface level: the “other transformation” that protesters called for during the revolution. Specifically, this means addressing the very rules of the game: the way in which social capital is distributed, and the right to re-formulate societal values in accordance with ideology, which is the justification for this transitional period that will give rise to a new age.

Syria: from Peaceful Revolution to Armed Conflict
Hamzeh Almoustafa

This paper examines the process by which the Syrian revolution shifted from its non-violent, civilian phase to one of armed conflict. Since the beginning of the revolution, Syrians have faced a repressive security policy manifest in the systematic and persistent shooting of protesters, torture, the bombardment of cities and residential neighborhoods, devastation, and forced migration. No analysis of the armed conflict can ignore the essential fact that regime violence against the people
The Arab Revolutions: Five Years On

has been total and unrestrained by law or values. The conflict in Syria turned into an armed conflict because of the regime's insistence on armed repression for more than eighteen months. The Syrian revolution should be considered a popular national revolution primarily led by the provincial capitals and the main districts of Damascus and the cities of the Rif Dimashq Governorate, which in fact a collection of urbanized small towns in the environs of the Syrian capital, despite a name which suggests it rural. The revolution then moved to the countryside once it turned violent. This is not to say that those in the countryside have a violent character, but rather that they resorted to violence and attacks on larger cities and on transportation lines because they lacked other means by which to influence the public sphere. The Syrian revolution undoubtedly spread forcefully in the countryside after it passed through provincial capitals and small towns.

The Arab Spring and the Democratic Transition: Reflections on the Libyan Experience

Mustapha Al-Teer

The Libyan popular uprising of February 17, 2011 was a dazzling spectacle for all to witness, particularly given the deep malaise in which the Libyan people had been living for four decades. The demands of the revolutionary activists were numerous, focused mainly on the creation of a civilian-led state and disseminating the values and practice of democracy. How did they come up with their slogans? Were they simply imitating or parroting others? Before the end of 2014 Libyans had reverted to their "pre-intifada" condition, and the slogans disappeared. Does this signify that they were not capable of starting out on the path of democratic transformation? The paper is written from the standpoint of concepts of modernization, proceeding from the assumption that material modernization, with its various indicators, leads to modernization at the level of the individual.
that is, to modernity and this in turn paves the way for democratic transformation. In Libya, the sudden and even precipitous halt in what began as a march towards democracy could suggest that modernization in the society did not bring about a sufficiently broad diffusion of modernity.

The Egyptian Revolution and its Impact on the Formation of New Youth Subjectivities

Dina El-Sharnouby

Eighteen days of mass uprising in 2011 marked a temporal break in the history of repression and political stagnation of the authoritarian systems which dated back to Egypt’s colonial independence. The mainly youth-driven 2011 revolution had important effects on youth’s imagination affecting a new youth subjectivity. Using Alain Badiou’s understanding of an event, the 2011 revolution is treated as an opening to new possibilities for change. By asking what happened to revolutionary youth, this paper attempts to shed light on the emergence of a new youth subjectivity that is affecting youth’s political participation and imagination for change. This paper primarily focuses on the period between 2011 and 2013 as a temporal opening for youth in the political sphere with ethnographic research done in 2011, 2014 and 2015.

Protest Movements in Post-Tyranny Iraq: the Challenge to Stateism

Haider Saeed

This paper examines the waves of protest that broke out in Iraq beginning in 2009, with the most important movements taking place on February 17 and 25, 2011 in Sulaymaniyah and Baghdad respectively. Protests also took place in many other Iraqi cities, influenced by the Arab Spring. The protesters’ slogans called for a reformation of the government, an end to the sectarian quota system and eradicating corruption. Other
important protests took place in Baghdad and various southern cities in 2015, calling for political reform. Usually, protest movements manage to bring about change if the political component, which is typically a series of demands for political and democratic freedom and the devolution of power, manages to accommodate the broader demand-driven protests. Political activists in Iraq, argues the author, have failed to achieve this integration. This means that the essence of protest movements is not related to the crisis in the political regime or the lack of democratic practice. A protest movement is an attempt to restore the state; it is itself an expression of stateism. Thus, once the state regains its powers, it seeks to weaken the protest movement and eliminate the possibility of its transformation into a democratic reform movement.

Algeria: the Fear of Political Change
Abdel Nasser Jabi

This paper attempts to acquaint the reader with the obstacles to political change in Algeria, a state that managed to avoid the waves of political transformations which convulsed the Arab world in 2011. The difficulties associated with political change were extant long before this, as seen in the events of October 1988, which generated some change in the facade of the political regime, engendering a modicum of political and media pluralism, and clearing space for free economic activity, but without touching the deep state. In Algeria the fundamentals of the political game remained unchanged. To address the faltering process of political change in Algeria, the author examines the political-institutional levels of authority in Algeria and their relation to socio-political and cultural elites.

The Kuwaiti Mobilization and the Arab Spring: The Dynamic of Mass Mobilization and the Abandonment of Pragmatism
Abdulhadi Al Ajmi

Perhaps the most important question to be asked here involves the extent to which Kuwait was influenced by the Arab Spring states. Also
in question is the extent to which Kuwaiti mobilization took precedence over the Arab Spring. Was it a result of the Arab Spring in general, or the result of years of struggle between the authorities and the opposition in Kuwait? In 2011, shortly before the eruption of the revolutions, the Kuwaiti authorities displayed a high degree of flexibility, which reached a crescendo with the decision to hold parliamentary elections in which the opposition took a majority of seats. The authorities however resorted to the obstruction of parliament. Social media was a prominent and effective factor in this mobilization with Kuwaitis calling for continual protests, with some 150,000 people attending the first protest, in scenes evoking the Arab Spring. The author suggests that the Arab Spring served to heighten Kuwaiti protesters’ demands, in effect being detrimental to the progress of the protest movement there. Today, with the setbacks suffered by the Arab Spring states, this Kuwaiti movement is confronted with the modesty of its abilities as compared with the power of the authorities and the counter-revolutionary wave in the Arab world.

The Sectarian Octopus: Mobilization and Demobilization Dynamics in Lebanon’s Power-Sharing System

Carmen Geha

The author explains the obstacles to mass mobilization in Lebanon vis-à-vis protest movements that are non-partisan; i.e., not led or organized by political parties or coalitions. To do so, the paper presents findings from two empirical case studies. The first is the 2011 movement that occurred over three Sundays in February and March aimed at bringing down the sectarian system. The second case is the most recent attempt by citizen groups to organize protests lamenting the municipal waste crisis and demanding immediate political reform spearheaded by the “You Stink” (tolet rihiton) movement. The two case studies will be used to unpack eight mechanisms referred to as the “eight tentacles of the sectarian octopus” to argue that Lebanon’s political leaders use the power-sharing system to obstruct the potential for mass mobilization outside of partisan spheres.
Protest Behavior during the Arab Spring: A Reading of Opportunities and Constraints on Political Change within the Framework of the Civil State

Khaled Farid

The Arab Spring prompted serious questioning over the nature of the authoritarian Arab state, and also allowed for an assessment of its political and economic performance and the social imbalances it engendered due to the absence of political participation. The demand for a civil state thus seems possible as a future prospect for Arab political debate when we scrutinize the specifics of the protest behavior of the Arab Spring and the added value present in the slogan, “the people want to overthrow the regime.” This is because the importance of this slogan in particular, and the modern means of protest that accompanied it, lies in the establishment of a potential historic rupture in the relationship of the prevailing Arab state with current and future social dynamics. Official political discourse, and likewise dominant forms of legitimacy, have consequently suffered severe attrition in the face of societies where young educated people who reject sectarianism, and are open to globalized communications technology, are able to hold rulers to account and move beyond their inviolability by imposing rules for political participation.

Identity-based Conflicts and their Impact on the Complication of the Democratic Transition: Egypt and Tunisia

Hafiz Harrous

The rapid outbreak, speed and intensity of the spread of the Arab revolutions left social scientists and observers awestruck, and the outcomes of these movements five years on were equally puzzling given their diversity. Some of them resulted in internal conflicts, be they civil, tribal, or sectarian, while the Tunisian experience succeeded in achieving something of a breakthrough towards democratization.
The Egyptian experience, meanwhile, ended up with a coup against the nascent democratic experiment and regression back to the era of authoritarianism. There might be a range of reasons for these different outcomes, but this paper is particularly interested in how much influence a national consensus or lack thereof had on the success or failure of the transitional period. Specifically, it concentrates on the issue of contested identity between the secular and the Islamic by comparing the Tunisian experience of relative success in achieving stability and democratic transition with the Egyptian experience of bitter setback.

**Revolution and Rebirth in Syria**

Wendy Pearlman

Conventional definitions equate revolution with a people’s replacement of one political system with another. In emphasizing state institutions over societal experiences, however, this perspective underestimates the psychological, cultural, and emotional pillars of domination. This paper explores this argument through examination of original interviews with Syrians who describe their surmounting of fear and participation in protest as a kind of rebirth. It argues that mass protest in Syria was revolutionary because it marked people’s refusal to fulfill the role of intimated and deferent citizens, which the authoritarian system had demanded and required. This humanistic analysis of the Arab uprisings challenges those who gauge their success primarily in terms of instituting democracy. Even if aspects of authoritarianism persist, citizens’ expectations about what it means to be governed have been fundamentally altered. Taking stock of the revolts, we must attend to those transformations in the society element of state-society relations.

**Syria: Economic Policies during Times of Conflict**

Linda Matar

With no political solution in sight and the escalation of military aggression, the Syrian economy is now firmly a war-torn economy. The
high risks and uncertainty that overshadow the Syrian economy have made it hard for the government to carry out any economic activity easily and feasibly. This paper will look into the crisis-ridden Syrian economy and examine the government’s macroeconomic policies during times of conflict. Given the overwhelming humanitarian crisis, one of the worst in recent history, the government’s priorities over the last five years have been dedicated to ensuring the supply of food, medicine and other necessities to the citizens residing in areas that are still under control of the Assad regime. Since the beginning of the uprising in 2011, the Assad government has taken steps to resume its intervention in the market in order to ensure that economic devastation and social hardships do not worsen. This paper argues that new shifts in economic measures aimed at restoring some sort of normalcy to economic activities cannot rectify the deadly course of events unfolding in Syria, but have been able to muster some national resources to support the Assad regime.

Whither Science, Technology and Innovation in the ‘Arab Spring’ Countries? Where Do We Head Now That the Old Roadmaps Led to Disaster?

Omar Bizri

For over four decades Arab countries have drafted and – to varying degrees – implemented science, technology and innovation (STI) policies as part of their efforts towards growth and development. Yet, judging by commonly used performance criteria, while some progress may be cited in certain areas, they have little to show for their efforts. Thus, in terms of concrete achievements and tangible results their STI capabilities remain far below those of even many other developing countries. Nor is there room for much optimism when one examines the present status of STI institutions in many Arab countries. Indeed, their output in terms of qualified personnel, knowledge creation and related productivity gains continue to lag behind other developing countries. This paper puts forward the proposition that lagging performance by the Arab countries is essentially due to pervasive rentier practices in all spheres of policy and decision making, and proposes that new policies and related implementation modalities should essentially be aimed at dismantling prevailing rentier systems.
Media Development in Syria: the Janus-Faced Nature of Foreign Aid Assistance

Billie Jeanne Brownlee

This article intends to provide responses to some of the many unanswered questions about the transformation and the making of the uprising in Syria by exploring a new avenue of research: media development aid. Most of the academic interest has been oriented towards the role that the new media played at the time of the uprising. Insufficient interest, instead, has been directed to the development of the sector in the years predating it. What emerges is that the Syrian media landscape was strongly supported by international development aid during the years prior the outbreak of the 2011 uprising. By looking at the complex structure of media aid architecture and investigating the practices and programs implemented by some representative organisations, this article reflects on the field of media development as a new modus operandi of the West (the EU and US especially), to promote democracy through alternative and non-collateral bottom-up support.

The Arab Spring Phenomenon of Urban Mass Intercommunication: Means and Challenges

Sally Hamarneh

Through an interdisciplinary approach combining architecture, urbanism and the sciences of communication, this paper examines the influence of emerging media over social life and its inbuilt fabric. It does this in view of the fact that since the birth of the printed press and the evolution of means of communication, the media has shaped not only social urban habits and characteristics, but also built environment standards. In the twenty-first century, digital technology has added a new intercommunication dimension for all citizens around the world to socialize at any given time. This paper proposes a reading of the Arab Spring as a phenomenon of mass communication. Almost five years have passed since the outbreak of the Arab Spring and, though a judgement
of its outcomes remains premature, several signs indicate the need to initiate an academic discussion around the importance of public places in order to achieve sustainable democracies in Arab capitals.

**The Left and the Arab Revolutions**

Salameh Kaileh

This paper discusses the role of the “left” in the Arab revolutions. It begins with the definition of the left starting in the mid-twentieth century and relates the concept with issues of progress and development. The paper focuses on communist and Marxist forces, although the left in this era also included nationalist and progressive currents. Before the advent of the revolutions, the left had become a marginalized phenomenon repressed by the triumphant nationalist regimes, which a portion of the left itself had allied with. Following the collapse of socialism and its incorporation within globalization, much of the left underwent a liberal transformation and channeled its energy into the movements for democracy and freedom. The Arab revolutions began as the left was either in alliance with a ruling regime (Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco), or alternatively was centering its activity upon democracy or combatting imperialism. The result was that the left did not fully comprehend the situation of the social classes it claimed to represent and defend. The left was thus distant from the real class struggles taking place, and therefore had little impact on the trajectory of the revolutions which were led by the youth.

**Islamist Political Movements and the Democratic Process**

Nagwan El-Ashwal

The protests which erupted in several Arab countries in 2011 left major impacts on the political landscape, thrusting into the political fray numerous societal movements that later matured into political parties. Islamist movements were among the most prominent of these, including Salafist-leaning groups that, prior to the revolutions, were radically opposed to political participation and democratization. This paper seeks to describe and analyze the conduct of the Gamaa al-Islamiya and its political wing, the Building and Development
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Party, as well as the *al-Daawa al-Salaifya* movement in Alexandria and the affiliated *Al Nour* Party from March 2011 through to the coup of July 2013, which brought the democratic process in Egypt to a halt. The paper will focus on the approach of these movements to three major issues: transitional justice; these groups’ relationships with other parties in the political process, be they Islamist or secular; and religious pluralism in society.

**From Opposition to Power and Back: Determinants of the Success and Failure of the Islamic Movements Post Arab Spring, a Comparative Study of Egypt and Tunisia**

*Khalil al-Anani*

The author explores the response of Arab Islamic movements to the Arab revolutions and examines how they dealt with them politically, intellectually, and ideologically. The paper compares the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt with that of the Ennahda in Tunisia. It focuses on the process of transition from opposition to power and vice versa, that is the return once again to the opposition. The study argues that the determinants for success or failure in both cases are connected to three main factors: first, the political, social, and revolutionary context; second, intellectual and ideological evolution and the role of the leadership in dealing with the revolution; and third, the regional and international context and their role in delineating success or failure.

**How do Lebanese Salafis Establish their Religious Authority in the post-Arab Spring Period?**

*Zoltan Pall*

Numerous studies that focus on Salafism in different national contexts argue that the movement’s success lies in its ability to attract relatively young people who face identity crises related to modernity. In Lebanon the situation is somewhat different. Salafi sheiks attract regular Sunni believers who feel disadvantaged and oppressed by other communities
that perceivably have a better situation in the country’s sectarian maze. The Sunni dominated Northern Lebanon witnessed a growth of influence of the Salafi movement in the post-Arab uprisings period. The current Syrian conflict’s impacts on Lebanon led to growing Sunni-Shi’a tensions. In the midst of the deepening sectarian upheaval the Sunnis are facing a leadership crisis. Many ordinary Sunnis believe that they cannot turn to their current political and religious leadership to protect them from the perceived “threat” coming from the Shi’a. Based on extensive fieldwork in Northern Lebanon between 2009 and 2012, the author asks the following: How were Salafis able to acquire the sufficient religious authority to do this? And how did the interplay of the specificities of the sociopolitical context and inherent features of Salafis lead to the increase of the Salafis’ authority?

The Foreign Policies of Islamist Movements

Mohamed-Ali Adraoui

The fact that several representatives of political Islam have seized power over the last few years has raised the issue of how they conduct themselves in the field of international politics. How do these actors perceive the world, international affairs and the way in which Islamic countries should engage with the international system? In other words, to what extent can we consider Islamist movements different from non-religious political actors in their region of the world? To that end, three key questions deserve attention. Firstly, do Islamist movements promote a specific vision of the world, and what have their intellectuals and leaders written on this topic over the years? How have they framed Islamism in the field of international relations in order to defend their “religious identity” and the “Islamic interest and geopolitics” as stated in Islamic ideology? Secondly, how have Islamic parties coming into power implemented their political “specificity” in the field of foreign affairs? Have diplomatic realities influenced their current policy, and if so how? Lastly, is foreign policy a relevant field for political scientists wishing to study the permanent features of Islamism or their evolutions
over the last several years, especially since the recent ascendancy of several political Islamists to political power?

The Transition to Democracy and the Lack of a Democratic Alternative: the case of the “Strong Egypt Party”

Ahmed Abdul Hamid Hussein

When the Arab revolutions erupted, they were not led by any organized political parties or political movements, democratic or otherwise. Rather, the masses were driven by collective momentum alone. This was rooted in the deep-rooted anger against the economic, social, and political situation, which had caused widespread suffering. The conditions for political uprisings were present in the Arab world, but the conditions for forming a democratic alternative were absent. The various groups and revolutionary forces failed to bring forth an alternative. In Egypt, the issue became apparent immediately after Mubarak stepped down. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) came into power. It was later replaced by the Muslim brotherhood (MB), before they were toppled and SCAF returned to power. The study explores the problems impeding the formation of a democratic alternative in Egypt after the revolution. It focuses on the Misr al-Qawia (or “Strong Egypt Party”) as a model, investigating the transformations the party had undergone since its establishment in November 2012. The paper explores the processes used for mobilizing the group as well as the hurdles the party encountered, which are due to various reasons, particularly the crisis faced by the transition to democracy in Egypt.

The Deep State and the Democratic Transition in Tunisia: First Principles

Mehdi Mabrouk

Since the revolution and the overthrow of Ben Ali’s regime, through to the change in authority to successive interim governments, Tunisia witnessed the appearance of new political vocabulary. One of the most important
terms to emerge was that of the “deep state”. The 2011 elections did not benefit from the promotion of this term, nor from its transformation into a catch-all for a significant section of public opinion and the elite to explain the setbacks suffered by Tunisia during its difficult transition to democracy. This paper tries to analyze and deconstruct the term “deep state” as it appeared in most literature, and demonstrates how its use was for the most part linked with the faltering of democratic transformation and a return of the old regime. Irrespective of proving the existence of the “deep state” as an invisible parallel institution—which is impossible as long as its concealment is a condition of its existence— the “deep state” remains a mental reality that becomes a parallel, hidden political force controlling in various ways the formal apparatus of the state, as well as directing political decisions and activating defining events.

The Dilemma of the Arab Spring: the State in Opposition to Change

Ouled Bahi Boun

In the context of accelerating change across the Arab world and the unexpected retreat of the Arab Spring into a series of setbacks and reactionary movements, this paper seeks to determine which political and societal factors have made this situation possible. Is the state military and bureaucratic apparatus responsible for the recent turn of events? Or is it the lack of an agent of change? This paper concludes that the reason for the stalling of the Arab Spring has to do with the deep state apparatus and the state’s antagonism towards its own people. It argues that the Arab state and its apparatus are primarily responsible for all of the deep crises faced by the Arab people. This requires a re-evaluation of the strength of the role which the Arab nation-state plays in combating and resisting change, particularly during and after the Arab Spring.

The Structure of the Arab State and Democratization: Examples from Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco

Mohammed Elagati

Some ascribe the cause of the Arab revolutions and the social context leading up to them to the fact that political action was no longer limited
to an elite, leaders of public opinion, or the ranks of the opposition. These protest movements took the initiative away from the elite and leadership. Five years on, however, an assessment of the events confirms that these revolutions failed to achieve their aims to varying levels. Within this context, when speaking of networks obstructing transformation, these are not only limited to networks of corruption. Attention must also be given to networks of interests as a whole which try to preserve their gains and resist change. Perhaps one needs to go further than this and address the structure of the state itself, since it was clear that in cases where the guardian of the traditional structure of the state was absent, as was the case in Tunisia, this did not mean, as some claim, the collapse of the state, but rather an opportunity to develop this structure toward a democratic model governed by a social contract.

The Crisis of the Nation-State and the Dilemma Faced by Democracy in the Wake of Popular Movements

Malika Zekhnnini

A particular type of social movement was first nurtured in the Arab Maghreb during the second decade of this century, and has ultimately had major implications for the entire Arab region and the balance of power within it. The concept of the nation-state itself as it had been interpreted in the Arab Maghreb for decades has been strongly impacted by this great wave. The new social movement laid bare the massive instability which the formation of nation-states in the Arab Maghreb had served to obscure, and yet it also revealed the extent of popular support for the nation-state model notwithstanding its internal contradictions. This paper argues that the difficulties faced by the states of the Arab Maghreb in their transition to a modern nation-state model are the result of the domestic and external imbalances present in the post-colonial period. Is the current social movement capable of bringing demands for democracy to the forefront? What implications does this process have for the nation-state model adopted by these countries?
The uprisings of 2011 dramatically revealed the weakness of the Arab state. That earthquake unleashed aftershocks that persist today, and even states and ruling elites that did not experience severe protests were shaken. The immediate aftermath of those protests also revealed the weakness in Arab societies. In almost all cases a coherent, effective opposition failed to materialize. As the Egyptian political scientist Nazih Ayubi contended, Arab states may not be strong, but they can still be fierce. The paper will review some of the scholarly work on the Arab state and develop the thesis that a “legitimacy vacuum” substantially accounts for the current political turbulence in the region.

This paper contrasts Lenin’s teachings in his State and Revolution, completed on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, to the Arab uprisings of 2011. In fact, the revolutions of January 14 (Tunisia) and January 25 (Egypt) rested on state foundations and illustrate how any change from one regime to another requires an underlying infrastructure. Despite his rhetoric about the smashing of the bourgeois state, Lenin implies this more general point in his discussion of the political transition from bourgeois rule to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Working back from a careful rereading of his classic, this paper will compare infrastructural power across the Arab region to explain, in retrospect, the very different trajectories of various Arab uprisings and why a complete smashing of weak states would have produced an outcome that would have Lenin shaking in his mausoleum.

The author challenges the claim that the implementation of transitional justice will de facto aid the development of democratic institutions. He
argues that transitional justice has failed to address and anticipate contexts of transitions within authoritarian state structures, instead favoring the concept of “failed transitions”. He maintains that post-2013 Egypt represents more than a simple failed transition, and the manner by which the state has maintained itself raises important questions about democratization studies. The paper critiques the field of transitional justice, including the “failed transition” paradigm as well as the understanding of “transition” itself. The paper provides a genealogy of transitional justice and critiques the belief that transition automatically translates into a transition from dictatorship to liberal democracy. The case of Egypt since 2011 is used to illustrate this general point, and also to demonstrate how the state was able to utilize mechanisms associated with liberal transition to effect a consolidation of its rule.

How far ‘Above the Fray’?: Unpacking the Mechanisms of the Monarchical Advantage in the Arab Uprisings

Daniel P. Brown

How did the Middle Eastern and North African monarchies survive the revolutionary fervor of the Arab Spring? Despite the similarity of slogans, tactics, and images, when regimes toppled one fact stood out: all of the monarchies survived. “Monarchical advantage” is an elegant explanation for this variation. What exactly are the effects of monarchy as a regime type on popular mobilization and by what mechanisms does the monarchical advantage operate? Did monarchies avoid the mass mobilization that brought down republics or were monarchies simply more resilient in the face of mass protest? Do monarchies do something institutionally or culturally different that explains their survival when faced with popular uprisings? This paper will present an initial examination of these questions, interrogating the monarchical advantage by comparing Tunisia and Jordan. The author utilizes an institutional mechanism approach that compares the clientelist arrangements of the regimes and a cultural mechanism that examines whether mobilization was neutralized or its content nullified in Jordan,
as compared with Tunisia. This initial examination demonstrates that both regimes evince similar patterns of popular mobilization, institutional and cultural mechanisms. The pattern that quickly emerges is that contentious collective action in Jordan, despite not resulting in regime change, is far more sustained and backed by far more dense activist networks than was the case in Tunisia.

The Historical Development of ‘the Apolitical’ in Egypt: A Study in the Particularity of the Egyptian Bureaucracy
(with Reference to the Case of Thailand)

Hani Awad

The specificity of the Egyptian bureaucracy lies in the fact that its historic formation rendered it unable to accept partnerships with outside pluralist groups. The Egyptian Bureaucracy, then, grew to resemble a political party which refused to accept the integration of any pluralist groups within it. While the Thai bureaucracy has been open to pluralist groups in rural areas since the early Twentieth Century, the Egyptian bureaucracy was designed politically and socially as a group that isolates itself from society and demands newcomers to show loyalty similar to that of initiates into political parties. The relationship between the state and society in Egypt has further complicated the expansion of citizens’ participation in the political scene. The presence of large numbers of marginalized people who are affected by the state’s policies but still refrain from political participation allows the rulers in Egypt a wider margin to avoid a transition to democracy. This also provides the deep state with pretexts to corner the political opposition, which usually lacks political and social support.

The New Military Professionalism: its Impact on the Arab Revolutions

Hassan Al-Hajj Ali Ahmed

The military dominated a number of the Arab states that witnessed revolutions and uprisings including Egypt, Yemen, and Syria where the
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military played a key role in political and economic life. Initially, the main task of Arab armies was to confront the external threat represented by Israel. With the waning of the military conflict with Israel, and the signing of peace treaties with Israel by some Arab states, the ruling elites’ perception of the threats to their regimes changed. In their view, the external enemy was no longer lying in wait, and its place was taken by internal political forces and organizations. With the growth of internal violence in Syria in the 1980s, and in Yemen and Egypt in the early 1990s, the role of the army developed into a new profession, with the military undertaking an internal security role while also playing a greater political and economic role. This development led to the military forming alliances with civilian forces. When the uprisings took place in those three states, the nature of military-civilian relationships affected the nature and outcomes of those uprisings. The paper analyses the impact of the alliances formed by the military in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen on the outcome of the uprisings in those three Arab states.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Army: a History of Violence from 1954 to the Present

Carla Mari Emanuel Issa

Egypt has experienced a number of challenges since the 2011 Arab uprisings. Despite the military’s crackdown, threats continue to emerge from both expanding terror networks and continued contests against the current regime. Since the revolution in 2011 and the military coup in 2013, excessive violence perpetrated by the state’s military and security institutions have left its citizens with less freedoms and economic opportunities than they had under the regime the people originally sought to overthrow. This has prevented any positive transition towards a full and inclusive democracy. The purpose of this paper is to explain how Egypt’s “deep state” and the violence the regime exacts in the name of national security has hindered a positive transition to an inclusive and democratic political process. The author’s research questions will explore how violence resides not only in the deaths that occur in the
face of changing politics, but also in the ways in which a regime can manipulate violence to play on the fears many experience when they witness a potential reality of constant revolution.

**State Power, Transitions and Resilience: the Securitization of Democracy in Egypt and Tunisia**

**Arnaud Kurze**

The author examines the issue of enhanced national security strategies in the Middle East and North Africa to counter the growing threats of the Islamic State against a backdrop of promoting democratic transition processes. Drawing from case studies of Tunisia and Egypt, this study analyzes state-society relations in the period following the Arab Spring. In both countries, civil society faces repressive legislation in the name of national security, a phenomenon also known as “securitization”, which describes the process of state actors transforming subjects into matters of security. This leads to the question: Why is the strategy of securitizing democratic transition processes detrimental to fostering stability and sustainable peace? Referring to the concept of resilience – the act of recovering quickly from difficulties, notably used in development studies with regards to natural disasters – the author discusses the consequences of oppressive policies by Tunisian and Egyptian governments for civil society. The author finds that although these policies aim to control society by instilling fear, they also incite a polarization of various social actors.

**A New Constitutional Law for the Arab Countries**

**Antonio-Martín Porras-Gómez**

This paper aims to query the reconfiguration effectuated on the constitutional law of the countries affected by the Arab Uprisings. The Arab Uprisings have succeeded in triggering constitution-making processes and constitutional reforms. Using as an empirical base the formal and material constitutional reconfigurations that have been taking place,
this paper explores common features of a new Arab constitutionalism, and discusses whether we can offer theoretical references anchored in an evolutionary constitutional perspective and in the models of global constitutionalism to frame it. It offers a legal-institutional approach to the subject, focusing on the recognition and protection of new constitutional rules and principles. The focus is especially directed to Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, since these are the countries that have achieved a greater degree of constitutional transformation.

A Reading of the Moroccan Constitutional and Political Experience Five Years after the Arab Revolutions
Mohammed Bask Manar

The author analyzes the constitutional and political experience in Morocco five years on from the Arab revolutions by defining what the parameters of that experience are. He looks at the constitutional and political events in Morocco following the protests by the 20 February movement, which he credits for triggering some political shifts, even if it was unable to fully realize its aims. The paper asks whether real change has occurred in the structure of the Moroccan constitutional and political paradigm, or whether there was simply a change in the balance, which might include some transformations in the positions of actors without impinging on the essential operation of the paradigm. The starting hypothesis for the study is that the Moroccan constitutional and political experience, despite it avoiding the chaos and unrest of some Arab countries, remains confined by many structural obstacles that limit the room for change and impact negatively on its outcomes.

The Democratic Process in Morocco and the Problem of Effectiveness: the Case of the February 20 Youth Movement
Sidi Moulay Ahmed Aylal

Sociological investigation of the protest movement known as the February 20 Youth Movement demands a distinction between four periods: First, the period of anonymity which was characterized by assumed names on Facebook
pages that attracted youth to like and dislike posts; second, the shifting to a period of expansion which gave the movement the support of followers from different sectors and political orientations within Moroccan society, in preparation for attempts at nurturing and solidarity, and at times exploitation. Third, the tension that led to the period of division where multidimensional movements with multiple affiliations emerged in addition to the original movement. Finally came the transition into a period characterized by agreement and counter-agreement where accusations of withdrawal from participation prevailed. In Morocco, the basis for the movement’s effectiveness remained, and in the aftermath of the February 20 protests, the speech of King Mohamed VI on March 9, 2011 proved a rapid response to the movement’s demands as people welcomed the constitutional reforms in the belief that the 2011 constitution would be a prelude to the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy appropriate to the Moroccan environment.

**Al-Azhar and Support for Democracy in Egypt from 2011-2015**

Georges Fahmi

During the second half of the 20th century, religious institutions and ideas became forces for democratization across a wide variety of traditions and societies around the globe, surprising many researchers.

This paper seeks to answer the question about religious ideas and institutions in their relation with democratic transformation. It will focus on the case of Al-Azhar, Egypt’s oldest institution of religious learning. It analyzes its attitudes towards democracy after the ousting of Mubarak in February 2011 and during the different phases of the transitional period: under the rule of the Supreme Council of Military Forces (SCAF), the Muslim Brotherhood and the current regime led by Gen. Sisi.

**Conceptualizing and Explaining Post-Uprising Divergence in the Arab States: Syria, Egypt and Tunisia**

Raymond Hinnebusch

The Arab uprisings resulted in several different trajectories in different Arab states. In principle, one can distinguish states according to their
level of state consolidation. In this respect, the uprisings led to a weakening of many states, and, in some cases led to a “failed state” (Libya, Yemen, Syria), in which rival movements and regime remnants compete to lead state re-formation. Consolidated states can be distinguished according to governance, which, in turn, varies along two dimensions: level of elite contestation and level of mass inclusion, with four regime types possible: low on both contestation and inclusion (authoritarian); high on both (polyarchy) and several hybrids (high in contestation and low on inclusion (liberal oligarchy); low on elite contestation and high on mass inclusion (populist authoritarian). The three different trajectories are well represented by Syria (failed state); Egypt (hybrid regime) and Tunisia (polyarchy). This paper will examine the forces which pushed these states along divergent trajectories, namely the level of anti-regime mobilization; regime mix of patrimonial and bureaucratic authority; balance of agency among social forces (pro-regime, Islamic, secular middle class, organized workers); political economy configuration; and level of competitive external interference.

‘Revolutionary Forces’ Opposed to the Democratic Transition: A Socio-Political Reading of the Tunisian Case

Mourad El Mehni

Tunisia’s political awakening was vital to all of the Arab political advancements which followed it, beginning in 2011. Nonetheless, the path of democratic transition has been influenced by the previous experiences of the countries in question which have gone through similar revolutionary transformations. These changes have become the framework for understanding the transition to democracy worldwide. However, some of the political and social forces which directly participated in the Tunisian revolutionary movement have exerted pressure toward imposing another model for democratic transition, in tune with the slogans and aims of the revolution, as they understand them. The aims promoted by these activists are not always antagonistic to the project led by the state. This paper thus diagnoses the relatively
complex processes at work and analyses the outcomes of two elections, which have to a large extent shaped the Tunisian political scene: the election of the constituent assembly in October 2011 and the election of the parliament in October 2014.

**The Democratic Transition within Yemen and Libya**

Ahmed Idali

This paper seeks to examine the experience of democratic transition in Yemen and in Libya. It poses a number of questions about the success of the revolutionaries in translating the “spirit of the revolution” into a series of generally agreed constitutional principles. How did they overcome the hesitancy and uncertainty which accompanied the transitional phase? Were the revolutionaries successful in adapting to the political insecurity and in containing the shadowy figures who supported a return to uncertainty? Did they succeed in cutting their countries loose from the former regime? What resources did the various parties use in their struggles? Did the revolutionary actors attempt to turn the elections into a moment which gave rise to liberation dynamics? Ultimately, did their choices reflect the institutionalization of uncertainty, or did revolutionary zeal make institutionalization generally untenable? This paper addresses these questions and explores the stumbling blocks in the way of Yemen and Libya’s democratic transition.

**The Public Sphere Five Years since the Revolutions: Egypt as a Case Study**

Mohamed Ruhayem

Despite the centrality of the concept of the state in political science and in spite of one of the fiercest debates in political philosophy being over the definition and description of the state, and the delimitation of its areas of intervention and functions, the revolutions that stormed the
Arab region over the last five years have brought the question of societies rebelling against the traditional state to the top of the research agenda. The Arab Spring revolutions have raised very important questions about the shrinking and waning of the state on the one hand, and the extension of the role of the state and its tyranny over the public sphere on the other. This analysis tries to reframe the concept of the public sphere in Arab societies post revolution and redraw the maps of influence and effect between state and society. Using Egypt as a case study, it also tries to investigate the critical transformations in the relationship between state and society manifest over recent years and how this has affected the power of the state and the structure of power.

Auto-Immune Disorder: Manifestations of the Arab Disease in the Post-Arab Spring
Abdelwahab El-Affendi

Dilapidated regimes collapsing like houses of cards were not the only casualty of the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. A great many political theories were also struck down, particularly theories which sought to explain the Arab democratic deficit through essentialist cultural explanations. Such theories gained great currency in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, giving birth to the developmental reasoning that predominated in modernization theory and its derivatives, in earlier epochs promoted in particular by orientalists and parroted by many Arab thinkers for whom religion explained the Arab democratic deficit. But the flood waters of the Arab Spring swept away all of these analyses, with popular uprisings in public arenas across the geographic expanse of the Arab world. The astonishing blossoming of freedom in Arab public squares gave way all too soon to a hellfire of bloodshed, internal conflict and strife. This paper attempts to understand the problems which Arab societies face as a type of “autoimmune disorder” in which the putative political leadership and even ostensible national resistance movements have become the greatest threat to the Arab body politic.
The Secularist-Islamist Alliance in Post-Revolutionary Transition: Egypt and Tunisia

Leila Kabalan and Amr Kotb

In this paper, the authors attempt to identify and compare the cooperation and interaction of secular and Islamic opposition forces in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia. They infer that the choices made by Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and Tunisia’s Ennahda are deeply linked to the historic sociopolitical factors within the political landscape of both countries. The type of alliances between these two groups manifested themselves based on their previous relationship with the deep state, the perceived threat from different factions, and the socio-political identity of both countries. Intergroup dynamics and interaction also played a role in the strength/weakness of the groups’ cooperation. These factors dictated a transitional process for Tunisia that institutionalized opposition quagmires through pluralism as opposed to Egypt, where differences were not given the opportunity for institutional expression and subsequently resulted in a political crisis in Egypt that remains ongoing today.

Reflections on the Difficulty of Change within the Arab Space

Alhassan Bin Noujeim

The author presents historical-critical reflections on the difficulty of transformation within the Arab space. The paper considers the nature of the relationship between the hopes pinned to this movement and the historical reality that imposes its representations on individuals and groups five years after the outbreak of the revolutions. It then discusses the main obstacles to change, which are deemed by the author as historical factors. The central question addressed is: How has misunderstanding and misconception of the revolution reflected on the topology of Arab thinking? This question is treated by means of historical comparison using four main complementary themes: the priorities of the historical understanding of the Arab space,
which are priorities that enable us to comprehend the historical dimensions of this space; the representations of revolution in Arab-Islamic culture, the concept and its development and absorption in Arab mentality; an analysis of Arab reality on the basis of the logic of the ideology of revolution and the prospects for change; and a discussion of sectarianism as an ideology for the Arab present with its historical harbingers.

**Political Violence Channeled through Social Media: Obstacles to the Democratic Transition in the Arab Spring Countries**

**Jawhar Jammoussi**

The author explores whether the societal violence which broke out within the context of broader political violence is a reflection of a structural specificity inherent to Arab societies, and specifically pluralist Arab societies. The paper questions whether the Islamist-secularist polarization has contributed to stalling democratic transition, and breaking down social bonds. It investigates the kinds of secularism which are present, as well as which secular and Islamic groups exist at opposite ends of this polarization. Additionally, it seeks to understand the limits of the role played by social media in the revolutions and whether their role has been exaggerated. Were they merely technical mediators and vehicles for the transfer of knowledge, and has their role been blown out of proportion and presented as a substitute for other, more concrete socio-political factors?

**A State without People: Civil War and Displacement in the Middle East**

**Maziyar Ghiabi**

This article brings into the forum of (post)Arab Spring literature a new set of paradigms of analysis, which, rather than providing additional
details to the scholarly database, have the objective to re-order them. Thus, the article proceeds through a few theoretical steps. It addresses the interpretation of civil war in the Middle East, in relation to the popular revolts, which went under the name ‘Arab Spring’, by bringing in the recent contribution of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and the nascent field – announced by Agamben himself – of *stasiology*, the study ‘of civil war as paradigms of government’. It then discusses how this category embodies a mechanism for “governing” or “managing” the conflict in the Middle East by dissecting the politics of *takfir* and the materialisation of *displacement* on multiple phenomenological levels. This leads to the denouement of the concept of *ademia*, that is to say the birth of a “state without people” (*demos*), which is epitomised by the creation and expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

**From Awakening the Tribe to Looting the City: a Reading in the New Medieval Age**

*Heba Raouf Ezzat*

In the past few years, the situation in the Arab world has become unfathomable; our analytical tools and explanatory models have fallen short of its rapid developments. Theorists and observers can no longer speak without hesitation or act without confusion. This foreshadows a series of existential questions, probing the utility of social sciences in the Arab world. This paper investigates the transformations which have ensued from the failures of the state in the Arab world and its inability to realize independence, by focusing on the rise of the tribe and the domination of the city. The state’s inability to remain faithful to its own *raison d’être* in exercising effective jurisdiction over its territories has allowed the logic of the tribe to continue even inside the institutions of the state. Tribalism persists even in the organizations which were established to counter
the state. This remains true even in those countries in which “the tribe” as conventionally defined is not present.

The Dilemma of the Minorities: from Pre-Spring Oppression to Post-Spring Existential Threat

Mai Mogib Mosad

There is a school of thought which holds that the events that became known as the Arab Spring has had a negative impact on the situation of minorities — and an opposing one that considers that these same minorities, whatever the differences between them of sect, ethnicity, race or lineage, stand only to see their conditions improve, politically and socially, as a result of the accomplishments of the Arab Spring. Which of these two claims is the correct one? The outcomes of the Arab Spring, regardless of whether they toppled their regimes or not, do appear to have in all cases constituted a threat to social cohesion — to the point of posing an existential threat to the state in some instances. The debate on whether the oppressive pre-Spring regimes acted as the guarantor of protection of minorities or whether, on the contrary, these regimes played a role in the exclusion of minorities, is ongoing and became particularly heated during the explosion of sectarian violence in Iraq, the political battles in Egypt, and the rise of extremist factions in Syria. This paper addresses the emerging questions regarding the situation of the minorities in the region after the Arab Spring. In answering these questions, the author considers the historical and political background of the situation of minorities in a number of Arab states.

Sub-national Identities in Arab societies: an Imagined Absence, Painful Presence

Riham Ahmed Khafaji

Attempts to predict the future of sub-national identities seem hard given their linkage with the future of the modern Arab state itself. Astonishment at the painless birth of the Arab state at the hands of
colonialism, which brought about a distorted reality and crippled politics, has faded. Its place has been taken by current difficult transformations that might lead to profound changes in the nature of the relationship between identity and the Arab state. There are basically only two scenarios left for that confusing and composite relationship: fragmentation/collapse or change/democracy. The scenario of fragmentation/collapse means sub-identities taking control over areas of state sovereignty and the erasure of borders as a preliminary to their redrawing according to identity-based narratives. The scenario of change towards participatory democracy, on the other hand, is an attempt to mend the rupture in historical relations between sub-identities and the state. The sought-for democracy will allow concepts of rights and duties between ruler and ruled to take root, expand the scope of political and social participation, and diversify actors who are not necessarily beholden to their own sub-national identities.

The author utilizes a sociological approach to understanding the difficulties which plague the democratic transition in Algeria, which the Arab Spring has failed to bring about. While the Arab Spring sparked the 2011 social movement in Algeria, that movement never matured to become a demand for the transition to democracy. Instead, the protest movement was marked by a series of sectorial demands, allowing for its easy containment by the political authorities. The authorities were thus able to “buy” social peace, and to use the bogeyman of the country’s “lost decade” to scare the population away from the risks inherent in the transition to democracy. The failure of the popular revolutions to achieve their aims across the region contributed to a sense of social anxiety as to the possibility of democratic change. This suggests that Algeria lacks the social setting needed to nurture such a transition. In order to overcome
this reality, the leaders of the Algerian nation and the figures who help determine its national identity must seek to establish democracy as a means to achieve national unity.

**Cities, Provincial Towns and Marginal Slums in the Race to Damascus**

Isam Al Khafaji

The author attempts to illuminate the ways in which various social/regional groups interacted with the Syrian revolution. He proposes to look at several patterns of negotiating the ongoing war: tribal, urban and provincial. With the militarization of the war a powerful fourth group has assumed the leading role in the conflict, namely the marginalized social groups and the new immigrants who live on the outskirts of the major cities and in unplanned, irregular housing. Each of these groups, notes the author, has its own dynamics and perception of the crisis and its distinct goals. The frictions and conflicts that these divergent dynamics have engendered are already leaving their imprint on the course of events, and will play a crucial role in shaping the socio-political scene in post-conflict Syria. The tribal areas seem to be engaged in conflicts that are detached from the rest of the country. The role of the urban classes has been eclipsed to a large extent. Moreover, the rise of the Jihadists threatens to leave large sections of the Syrian people with no option but to acquiesce to Assad’s dictatorship or to live in exile.

**Democratic Transition and the Idiosyncrasies of the Arab Middle Class**

Rabab El-Mahdi

This paper aims to deconstruct the assumptions on the role of the “middle class” in the Arab world. First, it challenges the notion of a middle class as a singular monolithic construct, arguing that due to the
economic evolution of the region, one cannot speak of a unified middle class. Second, using Egypt as a case study, the paper argues that due to its historical formation, a significant cluster within those middle classes has championed conservative anti-democratic political projects in both its statist-military and its Islamic versions. The paper questions how and why the Egyptian public, on two occasions in less than three years, first brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power and then replaced them with the military. It argues that this seeming conundrum is explained by the hegemony of the middle classes over the electoral process. The paper shows how both the Muslim Brotherhood and the military essentially offered a similar political project that appeals to and represents the interests of the urban middle class. It then provides an anatomy of the historical development of Egypt’s middle class, and why it lends itself to such a conservative project in its different guises, contradictory to the classical assumptions on the role of the middle class as agents of progressive transformation.

The Containment of the Arab Revolutions and the Preservation of the World Order

Yasser Djazaerly

This paper examines the reasons behind the containment of the Arab revolutions. At a symposium convened by the Al Jazeera Center for Studies, Syrian opposition leader Michel Kilo stated that “There are regional and global powers, both Arab and non-Arab, which prefer for Syria to become neither a democracy nor an Islamic state, but rather for it to remain in the state of disarray it is in today until the time a solution can be found. I personally believe that the entire Arab world will collapse if this approach is allowed to continue unfettered.” Kilo added that “the Arab world is playing a game which the United States is defining.” While attempts to contain the Arab revolutions have so far been successful, in the long term these attempts will fail and breed even greater destruction. A study of the policies which influence this containment cannot be complete without an understanding of the
factors which led to their success; the contributions of various Arab states to further this containment; the ideological infighting which has plagued the various groups in opposition to the Arab regimes and which allowed for a return of the deep state; and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

What the Stable World Does not See that the Unstable World Does: Risks and External Influences in the Arab Uprisings

Felicia Pratto and Fouad Bou Zeineddine

Pratto and Zeineddine examine objective socio-political conditions for Arab nations, and then discuss the Arab public’s political beliefs and attitudes within that context. Using national indicators to illustrate their points, they argue that fragile states are complex, with numerous political actors at many levels, little adherence to official laws and practices, tenuous economic opportunities, unreliable infrastructure, and considerable outside interference. Such conditions produce psychological mistrust, threat, uncertainty, dislike of outside interference, and complex emotions about the Arab uprisings, which are illustrated in the paper with data from surveys from several Arab countries. The authors also use this data to examine prominent, widespread and stereotypical claims about Arabs that have been offered to account for their lagging democratization, and find those explanations wanting. Using this contextual frame, the authors recommend processes that may root democracy more firmly in Arab societies.

The EU in the Middle East and North Africa: Helpless Bystander rather than Effective Promoter of Democracy or Stabilizing Force

Muriel Asseburg

In 2011, European nations, politicians, diplomats and media enthusiastically embraced the so-called Arab Spring. The EU pledged
to generously support transformation processes initiated in the region with a “3 M” approach, which would combine monetary support, market access, and increased mobility, as well as through a reinvigorated European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Yet, Europeans – as other third parties – have not lived up to their promises. Against the backdrop of the Middle East and North Africa descending into ever greater levels of chaos and violence, the EU and its member states have been largely reduced to being bystanders, dealing with the symptoms of crises rather than impacting – let alone shaping – the paths of development. The paper will outline EU approaches, policy frameworks and instruments, and analyze the reasons for the limited impact Europeans have had on a neighboring region in turmoil.

The Russian Approach towards Non-Governmental Actors in the Levant during the Arab Spring

Natalia Berenkova

The author explores the theoretical background of the Russian approach towards non-governmental actors in the Levant region; the aftereffects of the Arab Spring; and the deterioration in Russian-Western relations that changed Russian Middle East policy. Despite initial skepticism, at the start of the uprisings Russia did not initially perceive the Arab Spring to be a threat to its interests. Nevertheless, concern about the possible recurrence of the Libyan scenario around the Arab world led Russia to its adamant defense of the status quo in the international arena. The events of the Arab Spring were followed by the increase in the influence of civil society organizations and politically motivated armed non-state actors with both a national and transnational agenda. Committed to a realist approach to international politics, Moscow feels more comfortable dealing with states and governments. Yet, closer attention to transnational movements, consolidated religious and ethnic groups and their ad hoc alliances became a political necessity in Russia. This article examines in detail contacts with Hezbollah
and Hamas and the rationale behind them, as well as relations with Christian denominations. The latter dimension, one that mirrors a domestic conservative line, is becoming an indispensable part of the Russian international agenda.